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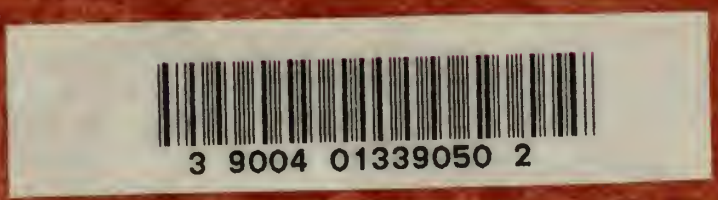

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Rev. William Bell

CHRIST CRUCIFIED,

A

SERMON,

BY

THE REV. JAMES GEORGE,

MINISTER OF SCARBOROUGH.

Price 7½d.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED;

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SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

PRESBYTERY OF TORONTO,

ON FEBRUARY 7, 1837,

BY PREVIOUS APPOINTMENT OF

THE PRESBYTERY,

AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

BY

THE REV. JAMES GEORGE,

MINISTER OF SCARBOROUGH.

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The author of this Discourse knows his brethren of the Presbytery of Toronto too well, to suppose that they stand in need of being instructed in the great matters of the Christian faith. On these, he believes the Ministers of the Synod of Canada, as a body, are of one heart and one mind,—men, who not only hold the truth, but hold it in its fulness and purity. All this most joyfully admitted; and still the author conceives that, being appointed to preach before the Presbytery, it was his duty to aim at stirring up, in his own mind, and in the minds of his brethren, a more ardent sense of the awful responsibility under which ministers are placed to preach *the gospel*, and to preach that gospel *aright*. Such being the author's motive for the train of thought which he has pursued in the following sermon, he will not insult his co-presbyters, by offering any apology for the close and plain manner in which he addressed them. The author is well aware that imperfections may be discovered in this discourse Such as it is, however, he now presents it to the public, earnestly praying that our Lord may make it, in some measure, beneficial to the edification of His Body—the Church.

Scarborough, *March* 1, 1837.

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A SERMON.

1 COR. I. 23.—"*We preach Christ crucified.*"

THE opposition of little and malignant minds, is ever manifested against high moral and intellectual worth. At Corinth, Paul appears to have felt this in all the various ways by which it annoys the honest and able supporter of truth. The Jews, and the judaizing teachers of Christianity, as well as the heathen philosophers, were all the open or invidious enemies of the religion of Christ; and, of course, the enemies of him who was one of its most able and zealous defenders. In his epistles to the Church at Corinth, the Apostle frequently alludes to this opposition, in a way the most feeling and delicate, and sometimes also in terms the most severe. The greater part of this opposition, the Apostle might have escaped, and obtained in its stead no inconsiderable portion of temporary fame, had he only been willing to sacrifice the peculiarities of the Christian religion. But, while no one was more ready than this great man, to give up non-essentials, for the sake of preserving "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," yet no one was more unbending than he, when the surrender demanded, threatened the safety of even the remotest out-work of the Christian faith. Obviously averse, as the Apostle was, to all discussions merely polemical;—an ardent lover of peace,—and greatly pained when he had to lift the rod to chastise the Christian delinquent, he nevertheless was ready, the moment his Master's honor was endangered, or souls put in peril, to hazard all that men hold dear on earth. Endowed with a splendid intellect, and that keenness of moral sense, which discerns the remotest appearance of evil, he saw at once the nature of every assault that was made on the truth: and at once did he face the assailant, with that blunt and sturdy courage, which is found to exist only in minds in a high state of spiritual health. Hence the insinuations of those who affirmed, that were Christianity to appear with pomp, and stripped of certain of its doctrines, it would not then give offence to the Academy, and might find easy access into the synagogue—were met, at once, by the declarations, "We seek not to please men:" and "let him who preacheth another gospel, even were he an angel from heaven, be accursed." A crucified Saviour we must preach

in all plainness, even should this be to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

And what the Apostle thus avowed, he fully practised. Wherever he went, and to whomsoever he spoke, he preached "Christ crucified." Nor was this doctrine brought up occasionally, coldly discussed, and quickly dismissed. With him it was the grand theme;—the central—the attracting truth. If he leaves it for a moment, it is but to show how far its influence extends, or to bring in some remote truths for its illustration. All his admirable rhetoric—all his sound logic—all his knowledge as a Jew, are laid under contribution, to throw light on "the cross of Christ." Would we, my brethren, wish, above all things, when we come to give in our account, to be able to say, like the Apostle, we "have fought the good fight, we have kept the faith:" Oh let us, like him, fully and resolutely "preach Christ crucified," for this is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," unto salvation.

That this resolution may take a fast hold of our minds, and may be carried fully out in our pulpit labors; I shall, relying on Divine assistance, endeavour first to explain briefly the matter contained in the text:—and next, I shall offer a few remarks on the manner in which the doctrine of the text ought to be preached.

I. *The Matter* contained in the text, *is the way of Salvation through Jesus Christ.* The expression "Christ crucified," like many similar expressions, must be regarded as a generic phrase. "The death of Christ," and "the cross of Christ," are expressions of the same import. They all embrace not one, but many truths. Indeed, they imply frequently, the whole of what was done by the Saviour as Mediator, when he made a "propitiation for sin." If this be correct, then the phrase "Christ crucified," implies not merely his sufferings, in making the atonement to Divine Justice, but also his active obedience to all the claims of the Divine law.

In all languages that have reached maturity, and especially when language is employed by such a concise and vigorous writer as Paul, a single expression, and not unfrequently a single term is made to denote a whole system of truths. Thus, in the 17th and 18th verses of this chapter, the word "cross," is plainly employed for the whole of the Mediator's work. By not knowing, or over-looking the fact, that a single term is often a symbol for a whole class of truths, men fall into serious errors; or if they escape the pollution of error, they see truth but very imperfectly. This mode of presenting truth, of which our text is an example, combines at once the

advantages of the abstract and the concrete. The mind grasps in mass, what is presented to the eye, but in a single expression. Thus it is, that the phrase "Christ crucified," brings at once before the mind of the intelligent Christian, all that his Saviour did in making peace betwixt heaven and earth. Still, it is readily granted, that the Saviour's death on the cross, was a grand—shall we not say the grandest—part in the work of redemption. It is plainly *that*, from which, much that he has done and is still doing, must acquire all its virtue and efficiency. Whether the enemies of religion, with whom the Apostle had to do, examined the scheme of redemption with care, may be more than doubted. If they did, we may be sure they found nothing in it nearly so offensive as that which is its chief glory —the death of the Saviour on the cross.

A few remarks on the way in which this cardinal truth in the Christian religion may be supposed to have affected the minds of these persons, may not be thought out of place.

The notions which both the Jews and the Greeks held regarding the character of one entitled to the high appellation of Saviour, were among the few sentiments which they held in common. Both firmly believed that he only was worthy of this honorable character, who had trodden in the dust the enemies of his country, and had procured for men great temporal prosperity. Hence the Jews saw nothing in a crucified Messiah, but the quenching of the last ray of the forlorn hope to which the nation had clung. While the Greeks, under the full influence of a hardening intellectual pride, and dazzled with the glory of military achievements, around which their poets and orators had thrown all the gorgeous coloring, which a finished language and a warm fancy could furnish, saw nothing in a crucified Saviour, except what was mean and absurd.— The doctrine of the cross produced in the mind of the Jew, intense hatred—in the mind of the Greek, utter loathing.--- Neither saw the glorious principles which it involved, nor the glorious results which it would produce to creatures destined to live for ever. Against the blameless life of Christ, and the pure morality which he taught, neither Jews nor Greeks could, with any show of decency, take exception. But at the cross ---the shameful death of the cross---a Saviour dying on the cross—the minds of both were filled with frightful virulence. This virulence, the Apostle saw and felt, but tries not to soothe it down by removing out of sight the obnoxious doctrine. His only apology is—if apology it may be called---that "the foolishness of God," as they thought in this matter, "was wiser than men." And whatever construction bigotry or pride might put on a crucified Saviour, the Apostles saw in Him, the world's

last and only hope. And therefore in the midst of hatred and scorn, they boldly preached the doctrine of the text.--- What they preached was the great salvation.

But to return. I remark that Jesus Christ, as man's substitute, *had to bear the penalty which man had incurred by breaking the Divine law.*

To every law a penalty is annexed. In the moral government of God, we may suppose this principle to hold universally, and in all cases to be strikingly visible. For if there be no penalty annexed, it is not law but advice. But, to take the principle on general grounds, we observe *first*, that the law is unrighteous, and is justly allowed to give way, when the penalty is not exacted: and this is a common way by which bad laws have been rendered nullities. Or *next*, the law may be good in the highest sense, but the lawgiver may want integrity or power to exact the penalty when it is violated. Now all this may be true.—It has been so in a thousand instances, as it regards laws emanating from men, and managed by men. But it were nothing short of blasphemy to affirm, that either of these suppositions could be true, of a law emanating from infinite wisdom, and supported by a holy and omnipotent God.

To deny to God the right to place his creature man, under a law, with a penalty annexed; or to call in question, his right to exact the penalty, or what is more frequently the case, to suppose that He might pardon the offender, without any satisfaction to justice, involves such gross and impious notions of Deity, which, if not absolutely atheistical, certainly lead to conclusions not much less abhorrent to reason and piety. To man a law was given, and the penalty annexed to that law was *death.* "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Death then was the penalty. What this term implies, I shall not stop at present to inquire, further than merely to remark, that if it be true, that the term life, as employed frequently by the inspired writers, implies happiness, in the highest and best sense, it must follow, that the term death, which in this, and many other places, is the antithesis of life, must imply misery in the fullest sense of the word. We may not even surmise the full extent of that condition of complex and perfect wretchedness, into which sin had brought man. All the ills which men endure from sin in this world; yea, and were it possible to form an idea of the sufferings of the damned for many ages, still all this would give but a very imperfect conception of what an eternity of such misery must be. Yet this will be nothing more than the penalty of sin. God smites as a just judge. Not a stroke is given from caprice or tyranny.

Did the Lord Jesus bear the penalty of sin due to his people? No question to men so awfully important as this! And the Bible has solved no question more completely than it has solved this. Indeed the whole of revelation may be regarded as a grand demonstration of this truth. All that figure, and reasoning, and appeals to facts as employed by Prophets and Apostles, and Christ himself can teach, combine in teaching the precious truth, that the Saviour made an atonement for sin,---that he bore the penalty which man had incurred. Now, certain circumstances, or modes of suffering in the penalty peculiar to mere creatures apart; and we may with safety affirm, that all that the redeemed would have had to bear, had the penalty fallen on them, the Saviour as their substitute bore, when Jehovah laid on him their iniquities---when he bore their stripes ---"bore their sins in his own body on the tree." These, and many other passages, teach most plainly, a perfect substitution of Christ for his people. The satisfaction given by Him, was not therefore a partial, but perfect satisfaction. Nor is it a whit less difficult for me to conceive, of pardon being granted for partial satisfaction, than it is to conceive of its being granted where no satisfaction has been given. Justice has no degrees. It is perfect, and so are all its demands. It is sometimes asked, by way of a refuting argument, how could the Saviour in a few hours, bear the penalty due to our sins? It was but his humanity that suffered. True. But why should it be forgotten, that his suffering humanity was supported by the omnipotency of his Divinity. And who shall tell what suffering such a person---I say *person* not *nature*---may be capable of enduring without sinking under it. But it is a mistake to confine the atonement part of the Mediatorial work, to the hours of deep woe in Gethsemane, and on Calvary. It is true, these were emphatically the hours of darkness. But I take it, that every pang which He felt, as the man of sorrows, from the manger until "he bowed his head and gave up the ghost," was part of the dreadful penalty. The Saviour's sufferings might not be ---as they certainly were not---precisely the same *in kind*, as those sufferings which sinners would have had to endure, and yet they might be equal *in degree*. This is a point that needs to be well understood, and well remembered. This admitted, and then the sufferings of Christ may, and ought to be viewed, as a perfect satisfaction. Such did Divine justice demand---such did man need, and this the Saviour gave.

It is not my intention to enlarge on the sufferings of Christ. The tongue of man, nor angel, may not tell the full extent of these sufferings. Indeed, there possibly was much in what the Saviour endured, when He bore the penalty of sin, of which

no created mind can form any just conception. Yet enough is known, or may be inferred, to warrant the conclusion, that the penalty to Him was deepest woe. Oh! his prayer in the garden, and his complaint on the cross, place this beyond all doubt.

What less than bitterest suffering could be His, while His spotless soul was exposed to the fierce malice of devils, and when hell had mustered all its forces around him, and while every assailable point in his nature was pierced? The Throne was hid! He saw not his Father's face! The loss of the Divine favor, to such a personage, at such a time, must have been terribly felt. But this was not all. The sword of Jehovah had awoke against "the Shepherd of his people," for now the wrath of a Holy God was manifested against sin, in the substitute of sinners. These were elements in the penalty of sin,—these the Saviour endured. The cup which he had to drink was man's due, and would have been to man immeasurable woe. The Saviour drank it, and was able to do so, just because He was Emanuel.

But the Redeemer not only bore the penalty due to sin, He also *kept the Divine law.*

Man, as a creature, was bound to give to the Creator perfect obedience. When a law is broken, and the penalty endured, it cannot be supposed that this shall free from obedience, unless we conclude that suffering not only balances the offence, but at the same time procures exemption from all authority. This were to endanger the very foundations of justice. In the punishment of the offender, it is true, the righteousness of a law may be seen, still it will be more clearly seen when it is fully obeyed. Perfect obedience not only gives a practicable demonstration of what the law is, it also shows the benefit which it is capable of securing for those who faithfully keep it. The Saviour, as man's substitute, kept the law perfectly. And *two grand ends* were accomplished by what he did. *First.* The obedience of the Redeemer, by imputation, becomes a perfect righteousness for his people. And *next*, it could not fail but give to all intelligent creatures, the most luminous illustration of the wisdom, goodness and justice of the Divine law. Hence, would appear, in a manner the most striking, the righteousness of the requirements, the beneficial tendency of each, while disobedience would be seen to be wholly without excuse, and in the highest sense deserving punishment.

Man, by the fall, had become incapable of keeping the law of God perfectly. But this inability, could furnish no reason why obedience should not be required. What man could not do, the Saviour as his substitute did for him. For

God laid help on one who was mighty---mighty not only to bear the penalty of the law, but to fulfil all its requirements. "He was made under the law." Nor is it difficult to see that the active obedience of the Saviour was just as necessary to the great ends of God's moral government, in saving men, as was his passive obedience unto death. For what he did *in both* respects, met, in the most proper and efficacious sense, the two claims which law and justice had against man. The first as an accountable creature ;* the latter as an offender. He was indeed our Daysman,---the Saviour that we needed. He not only "made his soul a sin offering," he also "fulfilled all righteousness," "he magnified the law," "he made it honorable." And thus it becomes consistent alike with the *justice* as it is with the and *mercy* of God, not merely to pardon the sinner, but to accept *him as righteousness* in his sight.

There can, "therefore, be no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The penalty hath been borne, and in this lies the grand reason for pardon. The law, by our substitute, hath been perfectly obeyed, and this, in connection with his sufferings, is the sure foundation for the sinner's acceptance by a just and a holy God. Hence, "Christ is made unto us righteousness as well as redemption."

Taking the view that has been given as correct, it will appear, that the Saviour is to the sinner all that he needs. Does the sinner need pardon? Christ "has borne his sins in his own body on the tree." Does he need a righteousness that will bear the scrutiny of a just God? Christ is the righteousness of the law to all them who believe. Does the sinner want grace to fit him for serving and enjoying God? Christ hath purchased the gift of the Holy Ghost; and this, with the truth which he hath revealed, implies all that is needful for sanctification. Does he want a home beyond the grave? Christ hath gone to prepare mansions for his people, and he will come again and receive them to himself. In fine, the full, the finished work of Christ, which is the matter of our text, is *the sole ground* of the sinner's hope,---is the treasure out of which he must draw for all that he needs---for justification, for sanctification, and for glory. And may we not exclaim with holy joy, in Christ we are complete,---in Him we are safe, and in due time shall be made perfectly happy. "Oh! the heighth, the depth, the breadth, and the length, of the love of God in Christ!" No wonder that

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* Not freeing him from the law as a rule of life,—to teach this, is to teach the dark impieties of Antinomianism,—but freeing man from the law as a covenant of works was what the Saviour did.

the doctrine of "Christ crucified," viewing it as embracing all the benefits which redeemed men do now enjoy, or ever shall possess, and all the developements of the Divine glory which it gives, should be the great matter of the Apostle's preaching. But what made it so supremely important *then* that this doctrine should be fully announced, makes it equally so *now*.--- God is still the same holy and just Being. Man is still the same guilty and helpless creature. Jesus Christ is still "able to save the uttermost all that come unto God by him." The doctrine of the text, is still in the highest sense, to man the gospel. And woe be unto us, if we preach not this gospel.

I need hardly say, that on a subject so rich in matter, I have aimed at nothing more than to bring into view a few of its *more prominent points*; and now I proceed in the---

II. Place, to make a few remarks on *the manner* in which the doctrine of the text ought to be preached; and I would observe,

First, That the doctrine of "Christ crucified," ought to be preached *in all its parts*.

It is the fault not of powerful, but of subtle, and, I should say, of weak minds, to multiply divisions in a subject, so that its dignity is lost in an endless array of separate particles. In order to avoid this, it is not necessary either to examine or discuss the work of redemption, with an utter disregard to those natural divisions in which it is laid down by Divine wisdom in the volume of inspiration. To see the divisions of a subject distinctly, is to see the system, of which these are parts, as a whole, in completeness, in grandeur. I need hardly remark, that the scheme of redemption is made up of a number of grand truths, each capable of being distinctly examined by itself, and yet each an essential part of the system. Every Minister of Christ is well aware, that the Divinity of our Lord---the union of the Divine and human natures---the reason for this union---the passive obedience, as well as the fulfilment of the law by the Redeemer,---his intercession for his Church, and his dominion over it,---the nature and condition of fallen man,---the character of God as perfectly holy and just,---the nature of the Divine law,---the work of the Spirit, and the connection of this with the atonement and intercession of the Saviour, are, with many similar truths, essential elements in the scheme of redemption..

I will not say, that obscure views on certain of these doctrines to which I have referred, shall render faith in a crucified Saviour absolutely impossible. But assuredly the preacher who has but a feeble apprehension of any one of

these grand elements of salvation, will come to the discussion of this great subject under prodigious disadvantages. Of no system of truths can it be said with more certainty than of this, that an accurate knowledge of the parts is indispensable to a just conception of the system as a whole. What we do not know, we cannot teach; and what is seen obscurely, will be uttered imperfectly.

But even should we admit, that all the essential elements, and kindred truths of the scheme of redemption lie fully within the scope of the preacher's understanding, still he may lack the wisdom for discerning the relation and proportion which these have to one another; and this unhappy state of mind will show itself in a sort of excess, as well as in defect. For one or other of the truths he may have strong predilections. The others are overlooked, or only receive a partial glance. On the favorite topic he spends his strength. At first sight, one would be apt to suppose, that the matter brought up so often, and so earnestly discussed, would at least be placed under the strongest light. It is not so, however, and just for this reason, that one truth is so intimately connected with others, that neither its grandeur nor fitness is seen, unless seen in relation to the system as a whole. It is only when a due prominency, and nice proportion is given to all the doctrines, that the plan of salvation is seen in all its vastness, and in its wonderful adaptation to the present condition and future destiny of man. In vain shall the most able and zealous preacher try to show even the necessity of the Saviour's death, if he shall not, in the course of his pulpit labors, bring clearly into view the guilt and utter helplessness of man. Nor shall he be able to speak at all intelligibly, on the *terribly severe* sufferings of Christ, unless he shall at the same time, show distinctly the holiness and justice of God; who, as moral Governor of the universe, could neither exact more, nor accept less from the substitute of sinners than perfect satisfaction.

After making considerable allowance for what every subject, even the most sublime, loses of interest, if it has been heard by men from childhood; still it cannot fail to be matter of wonder, as well as of deep regret that the cross of Christ, a subject the most overwhelmingly grand, and the most intensely interesting that human lips ever uttered, should often be heard by Christians "as a tale that has been told." It is at least worthy of serious enquiry, whether this may not in part be owing to the manner in which it is presented by us before the minds of our people. By overlooking, or but partially bringing into view certain of the doctrines, may not our discourses become feeble, and what we say be confused; or

what is worse, end in mere declamation. Now, the evil is not that truth is not uttered—but it is truth without connection or sequence; and of course, it neither affects the understanding nor the heart. A point of the sun seen, and but a few rays felt, can neither produce admiration nor warmth.

But preachers are not to blame wholly for this partial view, which is sometimes given of divine truth. If I do not greatly mistake, they are occasionally influenced to take this very meagre course by the cant or clamour of certain persons from whom better things might be expected. The opinion of the pious portion of a congregation has great weight with a minister. But it must not be concealed, that these persons are not always as wise as they are sincere. What we have heard today, say they, of the guilt and depravity of man—of the claims of the Divine law—or of the justice or holiness of God—or of the Divinity of Christ, was all well enough, but it was not what we want—we want to hear the gospel, and this is not gospel preaching. Ignorant inference!—harsh surmise!—but often sufficient to stagger the better judgment, and pain exceedingly the feelings of a pious minister. By "the gospel," these persons just mean one thing,—the passion of Christ.—Hence, to please them, the whole mediatorial work must be narrowed down to a single point. They see not, that their favorite theme depends for all its grandeur, when discussed, on a clear conception of other truths, which when brought forward, they are ready to despise as little better than mere intellectual and moral harangues.

It ought to be distinctly understood, that the amazing—the ineffable interest of the Saviour's sufferings is not to be seen in the mere fact, that his human body was covered with a boody sweat through mental agony—or hung on the cross bleeding, torn, lifeless; but in this, that He who thus suffered was the Lord of glory—that He who thus bore the malice of devils was the adored of angels—that He whose prayer the Father would not hear was the beloved of the Father. To see the cross of Christ in its awful majesty, we must understand in no small degree, the jurisprudence of the Eternal Throne. And is there not reason to fear that by merely fixing the mind on the passion of Christ, his active obedience, and the great ends which it served in the moral government of God, are left out of view, and a tragic scene is furnished from his sufferings for fancy, rather than a solid foundation on which the penitent can build his faith and hopes for acceptance with a just God.

God forbid, that I should turn the eye of any away from contemplating a suffering Redeemer. No, no! Oh, no! The

scene of Calvary will be to all eternity the wonder of heaven, as it has been the confusion of hell. But let it never be forgotten, that a scene so splendid and so vast, can only be seen to advantage by those, whose power of mental vision has been strengthened by looking afar, and looking long over the laws and perfections of God, and by examining deeply into the character and eternal prospects of man. The light that falls from the throne makes the cross glorious; the light reflected back from the cross makes the throne more awful. If these views be correct, it will follow that to preach Christ crucified aright, we must give to all the parts of the great salvation that prominency and relative position necessary for showing it as a whole in its glory and efficiency; in its glory as a grand work of the Tri-une Jehovah; in its efficiency as bringing sinners from misery to happiness. In a word, all the doctrines of the Bible must be seen to centre in this, and to be essential parts of this. But,

Secondly, The doctrine of Christ crucified must be preached *with great plainness.*

It appears to have been one of the faults of the false teachers of Corinth, that they spoke in such a style as to captivate the ear of the fastidious and the imaginative. Nor are the hints in the epistles obscure, that the plainness of Paul's style and manner was one of the charges brought against him by these theological sophists. This to the apostle was matter not for shame, but glory. With the high mindedness of one who is doing his duty as in the sight of God, he gloried in the fact that he preached Christ crucified, "not with the words of man's wisdom," but with great plainness, and soundness of speech. Every one who has thought closely on the matter is aware that the higher class of truths, in all cases, is injured, and not benefitted by an artificial and ornate style. But on no truth has this a more pernicious effect, than on the doctrines of religion. The natural sublimity, solemnity, pathos and simplicity of these truths render mere verbal ornament not only useless, but when employed profusely it becomes exceedingly disgusting; while the immense importance, of all men comprehending every sentiment uttered from the pulpit, makes a plain style absolutely indispensable. It must ever be kept in mind that the preacher of the cross is sent not to instruct the literary few, but all; and many in all countries are, in the strict sense of the phrase, the illiterate. "To the poor the gospel is preached." And really a style so peculiarly ornamental may be employed, as shall render a discourse to them, in a great measure, a sermon in an unknown tongue. It is

true, men soon cease to listen to what they do not understand; yet a fanciful style may be so employed, that it shall please many, while it fails wholly to instruct them. There is a charm in the music of well balanced periods, and a gratification to the eye of fancy in a nice selection of rhetorical flowers. Were all this the means to an end the evil were the less; but there is reason to fear that the subject is often the means—the style the end. Discourses characterized by the ornaments of language, generally furnish much for imagination—a moiety for intellect; but not a grain for conscience. And it is not the least part of the evil, that suspicion is lulled asleep. The preacher labors hard in preparing such sermons; delivers them with zeal, while the people listen with complacent attention, and undisturbed consciences, and retire delighted, alike with themselves and their instructor. It is well that such pleasure is but of short duration. It is not flowers, but the manna of truth that feeds souls. Nor can the most powerful efforts of imagination keep up the interest, if there is nothing substantial for the mind of the hearers.

But, in order to avoid the evils of an affected, or falsely elegant style, let it not be supposed that I wish to plead for the employment of that slovenly phraseology, which, while it disgusts the intelligent, never can be a proper medium for communicating truth even to the vulgar. Such a style gives evident proof of a want either of diligence or of mental wealth. And although the bulk of hearers are not perfect judges of language, yet the diffusion of a certain sort of information in the present age is so extensive, that any thing like great deficiency in richness, purity, or precision in style will be noticed, and noticed to a minister's disadvantage. Whatever lowers his reputation, hurts his usefulness. And really, to utter the great matters of the Christian faith in a style even below good conversation must bring into doubt our claim to taste, industry, or piety. Nor let us suppose that we are preaching the "great salvation" with plainness, because in truth we may be too careless to give our thoughts their proper place, or to present them in a becoming dress. What is required is perspicuity and vigorous simplicity; language that shall not hide, but show thought, and show it in such a manner that the most illiterate shall see it clearly—while the most polished may not take offence at the form in which it is presented.

I cannot help thinking that the scheme of redemption contains matter so vast—of such variety—and withal so interesting, that if it is well understood, and deeply felt, it will naturally find for itself, in every cultivated mind, a dignified, simple, and warm phraseology. On this subject we may say,

with peculiar propriety, take care of your thoughts, and your words will take care of themselves. And let us take care of the thought. It is God's truth, and we do it the greatest justice, my brethren, when we present it as nearly as possible in the dignified and simple form in which it is presented by the inspired writers. And let us never suppose, that the doctrine of Christ crucified can acquire additional glory from the flowers of rhetoric, or that the tones in which Almighty God hath spoken shall acquire additional force from the rythm of language. Add to the grandeur of the pyramids by a garland of flowers; increase the glories of the ocean by the reflection of mirror; augment the splendors of the sun by the gleam of a torch—vain efforts! but not so vain, and nothing so wicked as when men set about giving new dignity and interest to the cross of Christ by tropes, figures, and tiny conceits. The work of the Lord of glory needs no embellishment. Besides, all this false adornment disgusts men of enlightened piety; furnishes nothing for the troubled soul to look at, and what is most ruinous, under the gaudy drapery is hidden from the eye of the ignorant, and the young the pearl of great price. And when we make this fair show of speech from literary vanity or to gain a vulgar fame, are we not chargeable with the dreadful sin of preaching ourselves and not the Lord Jesus?

My brethren, let us never forget that every time we deliver the message, there may be some present that *never* yet heard a crucified Saviour preached. Such need plain instruction. There may be some hardened sinner before us, whose conscience ought to be pierced with the arrows of truth.—There may be some backslider, who needs to be reclaimed; or there may be some mourner, whose sorrowing heart needs very much the consolations of the gospel. Shall we spend our hour in amusing such persons as these with finely balanced periods, nice figures, and pointed antithesis. This were treason to our Prince—this were monstrous cruelty to souls. It is at the hearer's peril, if he understands the message, and yet neglects or despises the truth. But it is at our peril if he hears, but, either from our sloth or affectation, understands not the doctrine of the cross. That we may avoid a result so dreadful, let us ever preach Christ crucified in a simple, clear, and dignified style. And while we guard against prim elegance, sad evidence of vanity! let us also avoid slovenly meanness, sure indication of sloth! But

Third, We must preach the doctrine of Christ crucified *with great earnestness and courage.*

All intelligent and right hearted men speak with warmth on what does, or appears to, involve their dearest interests. Nay, men pleading for the interests of others with whom they sympathize, are not ashamed to manifest a considerable degree of zeal. This is honest, and as honorable as it is honest. Now, admit that the preacher of the cross firmly believes that interests of infinite value are at stake; that what he pleads for is to himself and all other human beings of immeasurable importance; and is not his zeal natural and highly praiseworthy? Professing to stand betwixt the living and the dead; to have a commission from the God of mercy to perishing men, he puts in jeopardy his claims to integrity, if he manifests no warmth in delivering a message so sacred, and pointing to results so important. We say that all men speak zealously on what nearly concerns them. Infidels themselves do so; sneer as they may at what they call pulpit phrenzy. Let these men's feelings as politicians or pecuniary speculators be fully awakened, and the veriest zealot in the sacred desk never displayed more of burning anxiety. With the zeal manifested in prosecuting what is lawful, when kept within proper bounds, no man will or ought to find fault. But why, on the other hand, condemn unsparingly that zeal which the minister of religion manifests; why denounce it as mere phrenzy, and call the man fool and fanatic who may be somewhat warm while delivering truths which he solemnly believes, if received into the heart, will save the soul from eternal misery, and bring it to eternal happiness.

It is no difficult matter to conjecture why infidels are the *zealous* opposers of all zeal in the ministers of religion. They must not slyly tell us that they are only grieved to see taste and common sense outraged. We tell them in reply, that were they to speak out honestly, the cause of their grief would be, lest the religion of Christ should be propagated by its zealous supporters. But sorry am I to say, that this horror at all zeal in the pulpit is often manifested by others from whom better things might be expected. Professors of religion, and even some that wait at the altar, have shown as much alarm at warmth in a preacher, as if this endangered the very existence of truth. This is neither wise nor consistent. At the bar, in the senate, or in the public hall, these men can applaud the highest zeal in a speaker, when he is supporting measures of great moment. Nay more, a *minister of religion* on the platform, pleading for the temporal interests of his fellow-men, may be just as warm as he chooses, and still these persons will admire and applaud the man. Now,

there is really nothing reprehensible in all this. But mark the transition. Let the same man pass from the platform to the pulpit, and although now he is pleading for the eternal interests of men, setting forth the glory of God and the love of the Saviour; yet, in the eyes of his former admirers, he risks all claims to sanity, or at least to prudence and talents, if he manifests any degree of warmth on these highest themes; and he whose zeal was applauded, when he spoke on the temporal interests of his fellow-men, is now turned away from with bitter derision, and the leer of scorn is flung at him. For what he was admired on the platform, he is despised in the pulpit; and the hands that were raised to applaud him there, are lifted up in utter pity now, if he manifests even a moderate share of well tempered zeal.

I say well tempered zeal, for there is a passion, or rather a fury of passion, which has more of animal than of mental excitement in it, and which, as it springs not from the finer elements of mind, can never rightly affect the minds of others. Good sense and religion alike condemn this. For forced emotion—and all such emotion is forced—is to true feeling what bombast is to the sublime, not only different from it, but the indulgence in the vicious will ever prevent a man from reaching the genuine. Affected feeling is mere sound,—a whirlwind in a dusty street, at which men may gaze for a moment with curious wonder, but in which they have no wish to breathe or move. But, in order to avoid this extravagant commotion of the animal passions, or, what is more likely, to escape the sneer of the infidel, or the pity of the formalist, shall we sink down to utter heartlessness?—shall the truth freeze on our lips, and fall like mildew on the vineyard of the Lord? No, rather let us fearlessly risk every claim to prudence and talents in the estimation of the enemies of religion,—rather let us be called madmen and babblers, than sink down to that iceberg temperature which would please those who neither love the Lord Jesus, nor the souls of men. Oh, it is an outrage on nature and piety, to speak on the most awful subjects that man ever uttered as if we were speaking on the most indifferent topics of the day. We ought to realize it deeply, my brethren, that we hold one of the most sacred, and most honourable commissions that God has ever entrusted to men. The ancient prophets were often nothing more than the mere amanuenses of the Divine will, and often announced the Messiah in obscure hints. We are the expounders of that will,—we are sent to proclaim a finished redemption. We are sent forth to treat with men,—to beseech them to be reconciled to

God. And can we speak of the goodness of God in providing the *remedy*—of the love of the Saviour, in accomplishing the great salvation—of the certain and terrible ruin of those who continue in unbelief, and not speak warmly. This were not to be weak, but a great deal worse. Plain it is, that if we are not in earnest, we are are, of all hypocrites, the most loathsome. But if we are in earnest, and yet put a check on our feelings lest we give offence to men of the world, are we not chargeable at once with moral cowardice and hypocrisy? Is it meet that the ministers of Christ should mutter and peep like the servants of a half-detected heathen oracle? Is it to be supposed that the ambassadors of heaven shall hang down their heads as if ashamed of their king or the mission on which they are sent? This may not—this dare not,—this, my brethren, shall not be. For each one, methinks, is ready to exclaim, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." And no man of a healthy mind, and under the influence of enlightened piety, need be afraid that his zeal shall carry him to fanaticism. The zeal that ends there, was not, we have reason to fear, lighted up by the fire from off the the altar.

Fourth, We remark that *courage* is also necessary for preaching Christ crucified aright.

Moral courage depends, in a great measure, on zeal. If our zeal be feeble, our courage will soon fail, and very likely fail at the point where it is most needed. It is true, that, in the present age, we do not require *precisely the sort* of courage that was requisite to support the martyr on the rack or at the stake. Yet, it may be more than questioned whether some whose courage would have borne them triumphantly through the severest bodily sufferings have not shamefully failed, under the frown of formal professors, or under the influence of the sleek expediency, or infidel sophistry of the world. I wish to make this plain. And for this purpose, let us suppose that the wealthy and the learned in a congregation *sincerely dislike* to hear a crucified Saviour preached. For a time the preacher is ignorant of this hostile feeling. But at length he comes to hear it whispered, that another sort of preaching than "the cross of Christ" would be really more useful, and give greater satisfaction. These persons—sage in their advice—would not object to a small portion of doctrinal preaching, and they even hint that the time may come when it would be useful to preach the doctrine of the cross somewhat fully *among them.* But, in the mean time, good plain moral discourses are, on all accounts, more suitable. Now, all this,

and much more, is endorsed in public, by their blank indifferency, whenever the doctrine of the cross is brought into view: while in private, the minister meets with broad hints, and cold looks, and dark surmises about men ruining their usefulness, by dwelling too much on the doctrinal portion of religion. Now, if the preacher be a man of high moral courage, all this will just tend to make him so much the more resolute in proclaiming the doctrines of the cross. It is, however, no great disparagement to a man to say, that even although pious, he may want firmness of mind. Hence, it is more than possible, that, under the influence of the temptation which we have supposed, some good, but too compliant men, might be induced to draw off from *the more prominent ground*, the peculiar doctrines, and place them in the shade, until, forsooth, the mind of the people is prepared, by a different sort of instruction, for giving them a more favourable reception. But not satisfied, it may be, with keeping what he knows to be the very essence of religion out of sight, the preacher endeavours to bring in the doctrines by stealth, and take the people by surprise. God hates expediency, when it implies a fear of displeasing men, should they see the truth as it is. This is not all. Those intended to be thus caught see the snare, and at once pity and despise him who employs it. They give him no credit for honest intentions. He reaps the reward that might be expected—dishonour; and what is far worse, truth is injured. Courage, fearless and honest, would save from all this; and ultimately produce much that is good, and, to the preacher, much that is creditable, in the best sense.

We deceive ourselves prodigiously, if we suppose that the offence of the cross hath ceased. This is still to many a stumbling-block and foolishness. The cross is still treated with scorn, or met with opposition. Hence, the courage necessary to proclaim it fully. Remove this doctrine out of our system of religion, and many who are now its open enemies would become at least its nominal friends. But, alas! what were Christianity without the doctrine of a crucified Saviour. And the folly of stripping religion of all that is offensive to man, is only surpassed by its wickedness. They know not what they do who efface its divine image, and put upon it an impress of hell. Nor need we doubt it, that just in proportion as the doctrine of Christ crucified is preached fully, zealously, and perseveringly, so will all the enemies of piety be exasperated to powerful and malignant opposition. The experience of many centuries has, no doubt, furnished abundant proofs to the great enemy of souls, that this is the only sort of preach-

ing that really endangers his dominion over the minds of men. It is, indeed, the doctrine "of Christ crucified" that makes nearly all the difference betwixt true and false religion. Give up this, and the difference betwixt any two systems of religion is hardly worth contending for. Popery was not consummated, and had not become the vigorous auxiliary of hell, even with all its enormous errors, until this doctrine was lost in the Romish Church. This lost, and all was universal darkness. Its recovery was the *Reformation*. And when the Reformers drew it from the Bible, and held it up over Europe, there blazed forth a light on the nations that dispelled the darkness, and broke the slumbers of a thousand years. If all this be true, the doctrine of Christ crucified must still be the grand point against which *wickedness* musters all its force. Hence, all errorists assail it first, and yield to it the last. All infidels hate it with perfect hatred; and all formalists strongly dislike to hear it announced with fulness and zeal. Can it be supposed, then, that no courage is necessary to meet an opposition so active and powerful, and drawing its power from so many different sources? Nor will it be supposed a vain surmise, that the time may not be far distant when those who *shall preach* this doctrine as they ought, will have to do so in the midst of dangers, of which we do not even dream. A grand conflict is obviously near at hand betwixt the enemies of all truth on the one side, and the friends of God on the other. That conflict will be about no minor points,—it will be whether the doctrine of the cross shall be banished from the earth, or shall triumph over all minds.

Fifth, To preach Christ crucified aright, we must make it *the central point* in all our pulpit labours.

Theology, taking the term in its most extensive sense, presents an immensely wide field for enquiry. Every preacher will be careful to give to each of the divisions a proper share of attention; but in his labours in the various departments he never will forget that all discussions are to be viewed as intimately subservient to the scheme of redemption. No labour is productive, in his estimation, if it leads not the mind to clearer views of a crucified Saviour. To prove the authenticity of the sacred writings—to investigate the antiquity of sacrifices—to settle the meaning of some disputed passage in the Bible, may afford the widest scope for the intellectual labourer, and his toils may yield him in this, just as in any other department of labour, no small degree of pleasure. But, alas! what were the argument establishing the authen-

ticity of the Bible, or proving the antiquity of sacrifice, or, indeed, any other piece of intellectual labour, if it produced nothing as a result that led to clearer views of Christ crucified. Nothing is farther from my mind, than to cast any disparagement on such labours: when sanctified—when viewed as the means to an end, and that end the knowledge of Christ, in his offices and person, they become eminently beneficial to the Church. And no one shall ever err in prosecuting laboriously these enquiries, if he makes the cross of Christ the central object.

The same thing may be said in reference to the moral law. Let this be fully explained,—let all the duties we owe to God and man be zealously enforced,—but let it all, whether viewed as a system of principles, or principles reduced to practice, be seen to terminate in Christ. If we preach the law, and forget the Saviour, we remove the ark from the mercy-seat. The law was hallowed by the blood of sprinkling. Hence when we preach the law in all its requirements, and show its terrors, let our aim be to awaken sinners that they may flee to the Saviour. If we preach on the holiness and justice of God, let out aim be to show sinners that before such a being they cannot stand, except they be in Christ. If we preach on the Mosaic rites, let our aim be to show that all these had their accomplishment in the great atonement made by Christ. In short, let the cross of Christ be the point from which, in all our discussions, we shall start, or that to which all our enquiries shall bring us back. This must not be *a* matter in the field of enquiry; it must *the* matter. It is deplorable to think of the preacher who makes the doctrine of Christ crucified a mere point in the range of his enquiries; on which he touches, and from which he draws just as much of common-place phraseology as saves his discourses from appearing absolutely heathenish. The doctrine of the cross can hold no secondary place. And no labours, no genius, can atone for the want of this in a sermon. Indeed, the very splendours of intellect which sometimes shine forth in such discourses, serve but to show more clearly their frightful meanness; while the possession of talent thus prostituted, but damns its highest efforts.

Sixth, To preach aright the doctrine of Christ crucified, *we must have a firm reliance on the aids of the Holy Spirit.*

There is no one thing that appears more clear in the conduct of the Apostles, than their entire dependence on the

assistance of the Holy Ghost. Readily and joyfully do they attribute their success to HIM who made men obedient to the faith. No preachers ever enjoyed such advantages as they did, who learned their divinity from the lips of the Saviour, and had for their imitation his living example. Yet, with all the knowledge and wisdom they possessed, never did they think of converting souls without the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. Are we better prepared than they were? Is the work of converting sinners so much easier now, that we need not the power which they felt to be indispensable? We are not to look, it is true, *now* for the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. The end for which these were given has been fully accomplished. But the power necessary in the days of the Apostles for converting sinners is equally necessary still, and ever will be while the human heart is the seat of antipathy to God. And we have just as good a right to ask, and expect the Divine agency in conversion as they had, who received the grand promise from the Saviour. If common usage does not warrant us to call it a miracle, we may, nevertheless, with the utmost propriety, say, that the greatest work done by the Holy Ghost, in the days of the Apostles, was the conversion of a sinner. This is His work still,—a work which He alone can and will accomplish.

What madness, then, for us to expect by the mere force of moral suasion or reason to break the hard heart; to purify the affections; to enlighten the understanding; to make the Saviour lovely in the eyes of sinners, and to bring them to bow at the foot of the cross. Nor must we suppose, my brethren, that there is no danger of us falling into this folly, and impiety because we avow, in words, our dependence on Divine aid. Never until we are completely emptied of self,—never until we go from our knees to the pulpit, in utter self abasement, willing there, to be nothing that Christ may be all; never until we have felt our own strength to be very weakness, and are profoundly convinced, that God's Spirit alone can do the work, are we free from what, in words, we would shudder to name. Shall man do the peculiar works of God? Shall man put forth his hand to effect what Omnipotency alone can accomplish? Presumptuous effort! But never is this presumption manifested in a more appalling manner, than when man puts on the armour boastfully, and goes forth, hoping by the strength of reason or *ingenious management* to convert sinners to God. Miserable men that we are! and miserable work do we make, when we forget that it is "the Sword of the Spirit," wielded by an Omnipotent arm, which can alone

break down the strong holds of Satan in the human heart. To Him, to Him, the Eternal Spirit, let us look with strong faith for that aid, which can alone enable us to discharge our high functions. And ere we carry our message to the pulpit, let us carry it to the Throne of Grace, and there, in deepest humility, bedew each budding thought with the tear of ardent desire that the Lord would help. Alas, my brethren, when we forget, that Divine Power is indispensable, "we labour in the fire," and surround ourselves and our people with sparks of our own kindling,—the light that is among us is darkness, and "how great is that darkness!"

I have thus endeavoured to show what it is to preach Christ crucified, *first* as to the *matter*, *next* as to the *manner*. I am sure, my reverend brethren, your patience is exhausted, yet I cannot close without two short reflections.

1. The preaching of "Christ crucified" *is the only sort of preaching that can convert the world to God.*

Had we the opportunity, which the beloved Apostle had, of listening to the anthem of the redeemed in heaven, we would still find, that the song which John heard, is yet to them "a new song,"—to them the dearest, the sweetest of all the melodies in heaven. The myriads who have entered that place of happiness have all learned the song of the Lamb. And as the mighty hosts gather round the throne, and gaze on Emmanuel with rapturous gratitude, do they not still exclaim, "Thou art worthy of all honour, and glory, and power, for thou wast slain to redeem us to God by thy blood." In the course of eternal ages many things may be forgotten even by the redeemed. This song never shall. The sight of Him that was pierced for their sins shall make this song *ever new*. Are they in heaven? it is because Christ was crucified for them. Are they redeemed to God? it is because Christ shed his blood for them. Hence, the redeemed in highest strains celebrate a crucified Saviour. Nor is it wonderful they should. Christ is the way to the Father; and no man hath come to God but through him. It is the doctrine of the cross which suits man, for it is this alone which can save him. And if we would really benefit man as an immortal creature, we can do so in no other way than by presenting before him the HOPE of Israel, the Saviour of sinners.

I will not say that a course of pulpit labours, in which the doctrine of our text is noticed but seldom, shall absolutely do

no good. There is a surface dressing of the mind which may produce a slight temporary effect. A sort of moral mannerism may be given to the mind, by polishing the affections, and partially improving the sentiments. But, alas! how temporary, how utterly inefficient is this for a heart that needs not only to be improved, but needs to be changed. As this treatment finds man essentially wretched, so it leaves him radically wrong; for it leaves him without pardon, without regeneration, or any title to heaven. Talk they of morals and of bettering the human heart who leave a crucified Saviour out of their system! Hopeless attempt. Know they not, that it is "the love of Christ" that constraineth to duty? Know they not that it is in "Christ crucified" we see the law in all its majesty? and know they not, that it is in "Christ crucified" we find the most powerful and never failing motives to all pious and charitable actions? And let it be written down in our hearts, my brethren, that whatever effects may, for a time, be produced *by the preaching* that draws not its influence from the cross,—even were thousands moved to highest ecstacy, and led on to noblest efforts; yet, it shall all end in shame, confusion, and misery. The doctrine of the Cross is the lever which can alone move the moral world. And it becomes us to dread every thing like *expediency*, as well as indifferency on a matter in which God has left nothing for man either to invent or improve. "Christ is the way,"—Christ is the light,—Christ is the hope,—Christ is the life, of the world. Overlook all this, and Christianity has nothing distinctive—nothing glorious—nothing that makes it worthy of God or fit for man. Its very ceremonies and offices lose all beauty, dignity and harmony. As if the sun were removed out of the system, the planets that now shine in beauty, and move in order under his influence, would tumble through space in dark confusion. So would it be, if the doctrine of Christ crucified were removed out of revealed religion. Without this cardinal doctrine it becomes as feeble, and much more ridiculous than the natural religion of the Deist.

2. *All this ought deeply to affect us who are in the Ministry.*

My brethren, if these things be true, what manner of persons ought we to be in all our public ministrations—how careful as to the *matter* which we prepare—how careful that the *manner* in which the message is delivered may benefit souls. No honour, no happiness comparable to that which he shall possess, who shall wear at last the "Crown of Joy" which they shall receive who win souls to the Saviour. But oh! how

dreadful, must our condemnation be, if by preaching "another gospel" than "Christ crucified" we lead souls to ruin. Our fate, shall be the fate of those guides that lead astray the caravan in the desert; to perish amidst the dying execrations of thousands. And if we have led immortal souls astray from vanity or ambition, we will have the distinction at the judgment—disastrous distinction—of wearing laurels steeped in the blood of souls. And the only plaudits that shall reach our ears, shall be the plaudits of devils, mingling with the groans of ruined men, who see their damnation closely connected with the vanity, dishonesty, pride or carelessness of those guides, that led them every where but to the cross.

God grant, my brethren, that we may all so preach Christ crucified, that we shall save our own souls and the souls of those for whom we watch.

ERRATUM.

In page 11, line 15, *for* "righteousness," *read* "righteous."

MAR. 20/31